

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Goodwill Industries of SE Iowa

Iowa Center for Industrial Research and Service

Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Iowa Gets New Product to Market

Client Profile:

Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Iowa (Goodwill) is a workforce development facility that develops opportunities for people with disabilities. The facility in Cedar Rapids, Iowa employs 80 people.

Situation:

In November of 2004, representatives of RepelIt, a producer of animal deterrent products, contacted Goodwill's Industrial Contracts Division regarding an opportunity to manufacture their new deer repellent product, Deer Fortress. RepelIt was very interested in producing a socially conscience product and Goodwill's workforce met their interests by providing opportunities to people with barriers to employment. Even though Goodwill works extensively with manufacturers, it is rare to have a product that is wholly reliant on the labor of Goodwill workers to get it to market. Goodwill was eager to take on the challenge.

Initially, Goodwill worked with a very manual assembly process to introduce Deer Fortress to Iowa as a test market in early 2005. After promising results, RepelIt decided to expand the product to a national market in 2006. The Goodwill staff needed to make many adjustments to the manufacturing process based on the growing volume expectations of RepelIt, but they needed help. That's when RepelIt and Goodwill called Paul Gormley, Account Manager at the Iowa Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

Gormley visited Goodwill's Deer Fortress manufacturing line and determined that a dramatic change in the process needed to occur to meet RepelIt's projections. Gormley and fellow CIRAS Industrial Specialist, Mike Willett, teamed to help the Goodwill staff consider Lean manufacturing processes that combined best practices with real world accommodations for workers with disabilities. A small team of supervisors from Goodwill were led through a Visual Stream Map (VSM) to map the current state and propose possible future states. A computer simulation was conducted to help determine the optimum process from the proposed future states. After the process was determined, Gormley and Willett provided suggestions on work station layout for the line and compiled a list of potential suppliers for pre-cut bent wire, a component that could most effectively be supplied by local manufacturers. With the help of CIRAS, Goodwill and RepelIt were able to get a consistent, quality manufacturing process up and functioning in six weeks. Each retail box of 6 RepelIt units was completely produced, packaged and fulfilled from the Goodwill facility. In the first quarter of 2006, more than 130 people gained valuable workforce experience working on the Deer Fortress project and attained the production forecast for the year.

Results:

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- * Increased production from 5,400 units to 12,000 units in 5.5 hours.
- * Provided training opportunity for entire workforce.

Testimonial:

"With CIRAS' help, we were able to grow our capabilities from an experimental process to a production system. They helped us meet our goals of providing training opportunities for our workforce and exceeding customer expectations! We are so glad they were there to help us."

Jess Schamberger, Business Development Manager